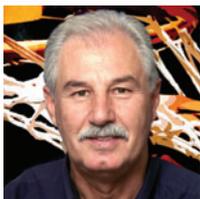




FIBA

We Are Basketball



by Costas Rigas

PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATION OF REFEREES

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The creation of Euroleague in 2000 and the ULEB Cup in 2002 has brought together the top players, coaches, and referees in Europe under the leadership of ULEB, the European Union of Basketball Leagues.

The three elements of the game that appear in public on the court cannot work in isolation. Players, coaches, and referees must work together to produce a good performance for those people who have to pay to participate, namely, the spectators.

From its conception, the Euroleague Referees Department has worked very closely and objectively with the coaches from all participating clubs in order to establish a professional working relationship with the best minds in European basketball. To continually raise the image and level of performance, it is essential that everyone involved have the same goals for the sport, the strong desire to go in the same direction, and a willingness to openly and honestly discuss all everything and anything that will make the game function at the highest level.

There is a schedule of meetings each season, beginning with a pre-season meeting in August/September, and a mid-season meeting in January, to analyse and evaluate previous performances. The agenda for each meeting consists of a re-

view by the Director of Referees, followed by open discussion with the coaches, and then a series of videotape presentations covering specific areas of emphasis.

The videos and the subsequent discussion between the Referees Department and coaches enables a number of Points of Emphasis to be created and taken to the Referees Meetings for dissemination. The discussion group in the Referees meetings allow the referees to participate in their own learning process and encourages individuals to make constructive contributions and decisions on various topics. Our staff attendance at the NBA staff clinic confirmed that we are working along similar lines in referee education.

There is an open and honest acceptance by all parties that everyone makes mistakes; players, coaches, and officials are all human beings and even the best of the best make mistakes. This acceptance enables all parties to have a greater understanding of each other's roles and a higher degree of tolerance when honest mistakes occur. The old, pervading situation of mistrust and fear between players, coaches, and referees has virtually been removed by the knowledge that it is now an established statistic that any team has a chance to win on any court.

There is a very close relationship in professional and personal terms between coaches and the Referees Department, culminating in the reality that 25 percent of the total evalu-



ation of the referees is made by the club coaches. Many coaches have used this opportunity to provide excellent and objective information on referee performances as well as sending videotapes of all games, along with specific situations for ongoing development projects. Communication is continuous. This information is passed on to the referees to encourage them to continually review their performances and behaviour. We also utilize 12 very experienced and respected observers, who watch many games and give immediate feedback to the referees. Their reports are another important tool in our referee evaluation.

Great emphasis has been placed on developing "mental" skills so that the referees can be better prepared for dealing with emotional situations as well as for the "unexpected." Everyone needs to understand the emotional reactions that occur during games. The Director of Referees and Technical Advisor review most games, either live or by video, preparing video examples for the improvement of the referees, both individually and in the clinics. The video presentations prepared by the Referees Department for viewing by coaches and referees always contain specific areas of emphasis such as "off the ball fouls," "post play," and "unsportsmanlike fouls."

In Frankfurt, during the January 2002 mid-season Clinic, the first-ever meeting between coaches, referees, and observers took place in a large conference room that provided an impromptu "mini" coaching clinic with both coaches and referees showing each other examples of plays and concerns. It was agreed that all concerned must continue such developments and cooperation in the search for better performances.

Therefore, the agenda for the meeting between coaches and referees in January 2003, which took place in London, included a practical session in a local sports hall. The theme of the session was "Interpreting Contact": what is, what is not a foul, and why? It is said that a picture saves a thousand words and that was very true as the session unfolded into a scintillating demonstration by some of the top coaches in Europe. Practical demonstrations of basic plays such as "pick and roll," "open,"

and "blind" screens, and "motion offense," as well as recognizing illegal actions created by hand-checking, charges, and blocks and verticality plays, all contributed to a very enlightening two hours. The verbal and practical exchanges between coaches and referees on the court were a remarkable sight.

In addition to this, there have been previous discussions with the coaches and members of the newly created Euroleague Technical Commission on the playing rules of the game, highlighting common concerns about certain rules that were undermining and restricting the development of the game. The 24-second rule dominated the debate and everyone agreed that it was a rule that should be changed for the 2003-2004 season, after being approved by the General Assembly of ULEB. Similarly, the new rules implemented for the 2004-2005 season, including time-outs in last two minutes and semi-circle, were approved after discussions with the top coaches in Europe, including such icons of the modern game such as Berkowitz, Brunamonti, Dalipagic, Luyk, and Giannakis.

The new Euroleague Technical Commission members participated fully in the whole program for Coaches and Referees, giving them valuable insight into the current work of the Referees Department and also how they can make a valuable contribution to the future. During the 2003 pre-season clinic in Crete (Greece), Clifford Luyk from Spain conducted an excellent clinic on "Basketball Terminology," highlighting systems of play and tactical situations. Panagiotis Giannakis, from Greece, gave a superb eye-opening clinic on how "Coaches teach defense", during the 2004 pre-season clinic, which illustrated many of the "tricks" used by players during the game.

As well as philosophical changes for referees in ULEB competitions, there have also been significant changes to the administrative procedures that clubs and officials have to observe. There is no hospitality offered by clubs, no gifts, and no notification of nominations. These changes to previous procedures have put both clubs and officials on a more professional footing and created more independence for both parties. Confidentiality and neutrality are keywords.

The introduction of the three-referee officiating system has more than justified itself by creating greater coverage and a decrease in fouls, as well as providing opportunities for young referees to gain experience in the company of two more experienced colleagues. Communication between participants has increased considerably, enhancing respect and cooperation. In May 2004, the Euroleague released a training DVD of its three-referee system as an educational tool to be used on a worldwide basis in conjunction with other officiating systems.

The referees have to undertake rigorous testing procedures in the pre-season clinics; they have a medical examination to check eyesight, weight, cardiac condition, and blood pressure. As well as the traditional International Referees Shuttle Run test, they also undergo a new BTR Speed test. A rules theory test is supported by a rules video test. The regulations for referees are strict in that any official not meeting the required standards is withdrawn from the list of referees available for nominations. In the mid-season clinic, the referees have to undergo another International Referees Shuttle Run test in order to check on their continued fitness and physical profile.

We fully understand that there are many challenges ahead. We plan to introduce new technologies to assist in the communication of video clips to referees immediately after the games by the introduction of laptop computers and the incorporation of observers using "Blackberries" to send instant examples via electronic mail. With the ever-emerging use of technology, but with the continued co-operation and understanding by all participants and a joint willingness to progress further, there is no turning back, only a determination to grow and continually improve.

We are convinced that the new agreement of the mutual co-operation between ULEB and FIBA will provide us with the opportunity to study in depth the exciting debate about the technical rules and also improve the technical level of all referees by trying to develop a more spectacular game, which in short, is what all basketball fans desire.